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INNER CITY PARENTS' PROGRAM FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN DETROIT INNER CITY SCHOOLS.

BY- CLEAGE, ALBERT B., JR.

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IN THIS ARTICLE THE CHAIRMAN OF AN INNER-CITY ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS CRITICIZES THE DETROIT BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR FAILING TO EDUCATE INNER-CITY STUDENTS. HE MAINTAINS THAT COMPARISONS OF COUNTYWIDE SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT DATA AND THE RESULTS OF EXAMINATIONS FOR MILITARY SERVICE SHOW THAT INNER-CITY SCHOOLS DO NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARE STUDENTS FOR EITHER WORK OR COLLEGE ENTRANCE, AND THAT THE PREPONDERANCE OF WHITE TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS REPRESENTS A PERPETUATION OF A DISCRIMINATORY SYSTEM TO EXCLUDE QUALIFIED NEGROES. A PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR IMMEDIATE STEPS INCLUDES (1) NEW PLACEMENT PRACTICES SO THAT ADMINSTRATIVE VACANCIES, BOTH CITYWIDE AND IN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS, WOULD BE FILLED BY NEGROES IN PROPORTION WITH THE NEGRO SCHOOL POPULATION, (2) NEW TESTING MACHINERY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROMOTION, (3) STATEWIDE MINIMUM ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS, (4) EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNCERTIFIED PERSONNEL, AND (5) CURRICULUM CHANGES TO OFFER INSTRUCTION IN NEGRO CULTURE SO THAT THE SELF-IMAGE AND RACIAL PRIDE OF NEGRO STUDENTS WOULD BE ENHANCED. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "INTEGRATED EDUCATION," VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4, ISSUE 28, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1967. (NH)

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INNER CITY PARENTS' PROGRAM FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN DETROIT INNER CITY SCHOOLS

Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Jr.

Statement prepared by the Inner City Parents Council, affiliated with the Inner City Organizing Committee, and presented to the Detroit school board on June 13, 1967. Mr. Cleage is Chairman of the Committee.

I. RECORD OF FAILURE

We indict the Detroit board of education and the school administration for failure to educate inner city children as evidenced by the following comparison of achievement levels in Detroit Schools taken from statistics furnished by the Detroit school administration and compiled by Dr. Karl D. Gregory of Wayne State University and published in *New University Thought*, Spring Issue, 1967:

1. In the comparison of achievement levels in Detroit schools, inner city schools tested at the bottom in the Average Means of Test Scores on Iowa Test of Basic Skills by High School Constellation, October, 1965, Grade 8B.

2. In the comparison of achievement levels, inner city schools tested at the bottom for above average senior high school students based upon the Schools and College Ability Test (SCAT), October 1965.

3. As shown in Table I, the products of predominantly "black" inner city schools are dangerously disadvantaged in a comparison of results from the examination of 18 years olds for military service, July 1964 to December 1964. This table reveals the startling figure of 49.4% of students from predominantly "black" inner city schools rejected upon the basis of mental tests, as compared with only 14.5% rejected in Wayne County as a whole.

Obviously, inner city schools do not prepare our children and young people either for the world of work or for college entrance. They prepare our children only for ADC and the war in Vietnam.

This conclusion is painstakingly documented in the *Interim Report of of the Northwestern High School Study Group*, dated October 1966, which shows:

1. 85.19% of Northwestern High School's incoming 10B, September 1966 class, performing at or below 7th grade level, with the overwhelming majority of those tested scoring between the 4th and 7th grade levels.

2. Only 1.19% or 7 out of 588 Northwestern High School 19B students testing High Aptitude; only 13 or 2.7% out of 484 Northwestern High School 12B students testing High Aptitude; and only 1.17% to 9.48% of students *in inner city schools* testing High Aptitude, as compared to 18.17% to 35.06% testing High Aptitude in all other schools in Detroit.

3. Only 14% of Northwestern High School's incoming 10B class reading at grade level and only 11% to 30% students reading at grade level at any of Northwestern's feeder schools.

The Northwestern High School Study Group reports that the Northwestern student body is "extremely well-behaved, and, as such, constitutes no major disciplinary problem . . . . However, its levels of scholastic achievement are low, its dropout rate is high, and its rate of faculty turnover is excessive." This is generally true in all inner city schools where the achievement levels correspond roughly to those for Northwestern High School. We wish to emphasize that we quote from the Northwestern High School Report only be-

cause Northwestern High School is typical of inner city schools and because its study group did an exceptionally fine job of pinpointing causes for the failure of all inner city schools.

The Study Group also reports that the principals of Northwestern feeder schools "without exception attributed the low academic level of their own schools to socio-economic factors and other conditions found *outside the influence of the school.*"

In introducing its recommendations for meaningful solutions to the problems of the feeder schools, the Study Group states: "We feel that what is needed most now is *strong, sincere, administrative direction* emanating from the Detroit board of education and the office of superintendent. The impact of this direction must then be felt by every administrator, in every office, in every school, in every classroom. This effort must be directed toward lifting the aspiration and level of achievement of every student in the Detroit Public Schools."

This same recommendation was made by the Committee on Equal Educational Opportunities in its comprehensive report which clearly revealed the same basic failure of Detroit schools to educate inner city children in March, 1962. [See Mel Ravitz, "Uneven School Progress in

TABLE I
RESULTS FROM THE EXAMINATION OF 18-YEAR-OLDS FOR MILITARY SERVICE, JULY 1964 to DECEMBER 1964[1]

	Percent of youths Rejected for				
	Qualified	All reasons	Mental test	Physical exam	Both mental and physical
Detroit Metropolitan Area[3] ..	60.6	39.4	22.1	21.1	3.8
City of Detroit[4]	54.7	45.3	29.8	21.6	6.1
Northern High[5]	35.5	64.5	56.9	18.0	10.4
Selected predominantly black inner-city[6]	40.1	59.9	49.4	19.0	8.5
Selected predominantly white outer-city[7]	68.1	31.9	11.7	22.8	2.6
Predominantly white suburbia[8]	67.8	32.2	14.7	19.8	2.2
Wayne County excluding Detroit	67.0	33.0	14.5	20.0	1.4
ADDED EXHIBIT					
National Average, U.S. Zone of the Interior	59.3	40.7	25.4	17.4	3.0
State of Michigan	62.5	37.5	20.9	18.2	1.6

1. Examinations were given to 18-year-old youths who were "out of schools and otherwise available for military service;" in effect, it "deals substantially with nondeferred youths." (Quotation from the source.)
2. Sum of the percentages failing will exceed 100 per cent of the total rejectees, for youths failing both the mental and physical exam, included in each component, are counted twice. Also, a very small percentage of failures for administrative reasons are not presented.
3. Includs Wayne, Macoumb and Oakland Counties.
4. Draft Boards 88 through 100, 103, 106, 179, 186, 192, 196, 202.
5. Draft Boards 92 and 94.
6. Draft Boards 90, 92, 94, 95, 97. Draft Boards 91, 93, and 96 are omitted for they either incluae a large proportion of whites and-or overlap two Detroit enclaves. the cities of Highland Park and Hamtramck, both of which have separate school systems.
7. Draft Boards 99, 103, 106, 186, 192, 196.
8. Draft Boards 66, 87, 101, 203, 219, 300, and 303.

Source: Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army, "Review of the Results of the Examination of the 18-year-old Youths for Military Service," **Supplement to Health of the Army,** Vol. 20, April 1965, Washington, D.C., and worksheets from the Michigan Selective Service System.

(Reprinted from **New University Thought,** Spring, 1967, p. 32.)

Detroit," *Integrated Education*, June, 1963, pp. 3-9] The Committee called upon the board to give its most effective leadership in endorsing and implementing these recommendations. "If this program is to succeed, both the board of education and the administration must develop a high sensitivity to human and inter-group relations. It must be accepted that racial barriers cannot be broken without recognition of their existence and without a conscious effort to correct them." The Committee then under scored its emphasis upon the responsibility of the board by stating, "We expect the board of education to assume full responsibility for those recommendations in our report as they apply to the school system."

We concurred in that recommendation then and we concur now when it is made by the Northwestern High School Study Group. In our opinion the Detroit board of education and the office of superintendent have not given Detroit inner city schools this kind of "strong, sincere, administrative direction." Detroit inner city schools have been left directionless and for the most part entirely in the hands of principals who have felt no sense of urgency or accountability either to the superintendent or to the board of education. Many of these principals have approached their task with the conviction that inner city children are incapable of learning and have transmitted this race prejudice to their teaching staffs by indicating that not much in the way of achievement can be expected from children who are either innately or culturally inferior.

II. CHARGES

We charge that this continuing failure to educate inner city children reflects a deliberate policy of racial discrimination which makes it impossible for the Detroit school system to educate inner city children until basic changes are made in its structure and orientation. We absolutely reject the rationalization, based upon Nazi-like theories of racial inferiority, which shifts the blame to Afro-American parents and children by labelling them "culturally deprived," "socially disadvantaged" or "lacking in motivation." We also reject the philosophy of white supremacy which seeks solutions in federally-or foundation-financed programs designed to indoctrinate inner city children with the standards and values of a middle-class white culture.

We charge that the basic reason for the failure to educate inner city children stems from the schools' deliberate and systematic destruction of the Afro-American child's self-image and racial pride. Numerous aspects of board policy contribute to this systematic destruction of our children's belief in themselves. The policy of providing superior "open schools" in the white outlying areas to which small numbers of privileged inner city children may be permitted to go and the policy of busing black children to "white schools", for example, express the underlying philosophy that quality education cannot be provided in inner city schools because if you mix black you can get only stupidity, whereas if you mix black with white you must get something superior to anything all-black and somewhat inferior to anything all-white.

> The greatest Negro revolution is that mothers are now determined that their children are to get an education. That will make everything we [educators] do work.
> —John Henry Martin, July, 1966

The basic threat to the Afro-American child's racial pride and self-image is the preponderance of white administrators and teachers in inner city schools. These individuals serve not only as teachers and administrators but also as white power symbols. The fundamental sickness afflicting inner city residents, both children and adults, is the sense of inferiority which stems from their powerlessness and the knowledge that they have no control over their own destiny. They do not own the stores where they buy. They do not control the banks which cash their checks. They do not own the apartment houses in which they live.

They do not control the political structure which dominates their communities. This kind of living produces an individual who evaluates himself in terms of his powerlessness. A black child growing up in this situation needs a school which counteracts the influences of a white community which constantly threaten to engulf and destroy him. He must find in the school symbols which give him self-pride, self-confidence, and a hope for the future. An Afro-American child who is forced to attend a school in which there is a preponderance of white teachers, white principals, white department heads, white counselors, and white administrators finds himself in a situation which can only underscore his sense of powerlessness and inferiority. These white administrators, aided and abetted by biased textbooks which present a distorted picture of the Afro-American child's history and culture, serve to rob him of any motivation to learn and to develop because he sees nothing around him to make learning and self-development seem to offer either an avenue of escape from the conditions in which he lives or an instrument by which he can change these conditions.

Two-thirds of the twenty-one high school areas in Detroit are predominantly Afro-American and Afro-American children constitute nearly 57% of the Detroit school population. Yet, white administrators constitute 76.0% to 96.2% of supervisory staff. This is shown by the following chart prepared by the Detroit branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in January, 1967:

TABLE II
RACIAL CENSUS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF OF THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM*

POSITION	NON-WHITE		WHITE	
	No.	Percent of Total	No.	Percent of Total
Assistant Superintendents and Field Executives	2	12.5	14	87.5
Divisional Directors and Directors	4	7.8	47	92.2
Assistant Directors and others	3	10.0	27	90.0
Administrative Assistants and Junior Administrative Assistants	13	23.2	43	76.8
Principals	16	6.0	250	94.0
Assistant Principals	30	9.7	307	90.3
Supervisors	2	3.8	50	96.2
Department Heads	35	9.5	335	90.5
Counselors	81	24.0	256	76.0

*Report of the Education Committee of the Detroit Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, January, 1967, Table I.

These white administrators do not hold their positions because the quality of their work is so superior that the fact of their race becomes irrelevant. The opposite is the case. In the face of their continuing failure as educators in inner city schools, they continue to hold their positions and to have the power to determine who else may teach or administer in inner city schools *only because of their race*. White administrators who are in control of the machinery of selection and promotion and who enjoy the power and patronage inherent in the right to hire and fire for federally-financed programs like Headstart and Teacher Aides can-

not be expected to eliminate themselves from their high-paying, prestigious, and powerful positions in the educational world merely because they are unable to do the job for which they are being paid. Stated quite simply, these white administrators maintain their domination over inner city schools because they have a vested interest in holding on to their positions and have quite naturally used their power to create and maintain a discriminatory system of selection and promotion whereby they are able to perpetuate themselves, their friends, and their relatives in their positions, while systematically excluding qualified Afro American applicants.

In the application for the position of assistant principal, for example, the written test counts for only 30% while the oral interview, in which a principal's word or evaluation can be decisive, counts for 70%. In the application for principal the written test counts for even less compared with the oral interview. Quite obviously, a system which is weighted so heavily in favor of a non-objective or oral test and against a written or objective test offers a ready-made vehicle for racial discrimination and personal abuse. In the most colorful days of rotten machine politics in city government, no system more glaringly discriminatory was used by Boss Tweed or Tammany Hall to eliminate individuals outside the ethnic or power clique.

> It is silly for American cities to believe that they are dealing with the basic problems with what I call lollypop programs for the summertime.
>
> —Roger W. Wilkins, Director, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, June 23, 1967

III. PROPOSED PROGRAM

1. EQUALIZATION OF ADMNISTRATIVE POSTS

Inasmuch as the Detroit school population is now approximately 57% Afro-American, and inasmuch as two-thirds of the high school areas are now predominantly Afro-American, and inasmuch as the self-image of the Afro-American child requires that he *not* be taught by white teachers and that the schools he attends *not* be administered largely by white administrators, we propose that the Detroit board of education take immediate steps to institute a completely new program for the selection and promotion of administrators.

a. We propose that all administrative vacancies (Counselors, Department Heads, Supervisors, Assistant Principals, Principals, Administrative Assistants and Junior Administrative Assistants, Assistant Directors, Divisional Directors, Assistant Superintendents and Field Executives) be filled with Afro-Americans until such positions have been filled with Afro-Americans in proportion to the number of Afro-American children and young people in the Detroit School population.

b. We propose that the Detroit board of education appoint Afro-Americans to fill all of the nine positions of Region Assistants which have just been created. This should present no administrative difficulty inasmuch as a large number of Afro-Americans took the recent examination for this position and it has been reported that the appointments are to be left to the discretion of the superintendent.

c. We further propose that all administrative vacancies in inner city schools be filled with Afro-Americans immediately. We have been informed that new evaluations for assistant principals and secondary principals are scheduled for early fall. We suggest that new evaluations should be undertaken more quickly to make possible the appointment of Afro-Americans to fill vacancies which will occur at the close of the current semester so that inner city parents can be assured during the summer interim that there will be more Afro-American principals, assistant principals, counselors, and department heads in inner city schools

> We feel America is headed toward a race war, and it becomes our responsibility to make black people aware of this . . . . We feel it is our responsibility to make black people aware that America is about to play Germany. That if America chooses to play Nazis, black folks ain't going to play Jews.
>
> —H. Rap Brown, new Chairman of SNCC, June 1, 1967

by the opening of school in the fall. We hope that the school board will seriously consider this request, that it will give us some assurance here today, and that it will make public announcements of such appointments with some sense of the urgency of the situatio. We are certain that inner city parents are not prepared to accept the present intolerable situation for their children for another school year.

d. We propose that immediate steps be taken to remedy the present glaring inequality in the racial distribution of administrators in the field of physical education where Afro-American young people provide so much of the skill and financial income from competitive sports. There are no Afro-Americans in the top positions of the Physical Education Division and only one department head for senior boys and one for senior girls. This racial discrimination is also apparent in the selection of coaches and referees for sporting events. In this connection also the ban on championship night basketball games at Cobo Hall or the University of Detroit stadium should be lifted. This ban probably would never have been necessary if there had been an equitable number of Afro-Americans in administrative and other official positions in the field of physical education.

3. NEW TESTING MACHINERY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROMOTION

To equalize the percentage of Afro-American administrators the Detroit board of education must employ a method of selection and promotion which removes from the hands of the present administrators the power to protect their own vested interests and to provide preferential treatment for their friends. For this reason we propose that the state board of education be asked to set up new machinery for the testing of all administrative personnel, in cooperation with Michigan state universities, and that the Detroit board of education agree to appoint and promote in terms of this objective evaluation.

In keeping with this proposal, we are asking the state board of education to consider this request and we are communicating with the Michigan State Legislature to ask that action in this matter be taken if the state board of education does not act immediately. We propose that the Detroit board of education request that the state board of education act in this matter.

3. STATE-WIDE MINIMUM ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

We are convinced that curriculum deficiencies and widespread distribution of inadequate teachers and indifferent administrators throughout inner city schools require that the state board of education act immediately to provide minimum achievement standards for each grade level and achievement tests covering minimum standards for each grade level from 3 to 12. These tests should be given at the end of each school year under the supervision of the state board in cooperation with Michigan state universities. The results of these annual tests should be made public in order that school administrators may be held accountable for their educational accomplishments. Administrators who are unable to keep inner city schools up to grade level can then be replaced without undue delay. In keeping with this proposal we are asking the state board of education to consider this request and we are communicating with the Michigan state legislature to ask that

action in this matter be taken if the state board of education does not act immediately. We propose that the Detroit board of education request that the state board of education act in this matter.

4. EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNCERTIFICATED PERSONNEL

The Detroit board of education presently employs 1,070 ESRP's (Emergency Substitutes Regularly Placed), a large proportion of whom are uncertificated and poorly prepared, and a disproportionately large number of whom are placed in inner city schools. We recommend that the number of uncertificated and poorly prepared personnel be reduced as quickly as possible. We feel that the financial economy represented in this strategy of hiring unqualified teachers at a lower pay schedule in order to increase the total number of teachers available is too costly in terms of the educational deprivations imposed upon our children. We demand that so long as non-certificated and unqualified personnel are permitted to remain in the school system they be equally distributed between inner city and outlying schools and that the percentage and distribution of such personnel be made public each semester.

5. NEW CURRICULA

> Q. . . . In Pittsburgh . . . you do not . . . face any [more] problems in securing adequate staff for .. . the most difficult school situations than you do in staffing your regular schools?
> A. . . . No significant difference.
>
> —Rep. Edith Green questioning Pittsburgh Supt. S. P. Marland, March 3, 1967

We believe that if Afro-American children are to be given motivation and are to be helped in the development of a desirable self-image, the inner city schools must realistically seek to compensate for all the disadvantages which are foisted upon inner city residents by a white society and which tend to make inner city children feel that they are inferior. To this end, we propose that inner city schools be given a different educational orientation from outlying schools. Inner city schools must become creative centers capable of giving Afro-American children and young people a knowledge of their history, their culture, and their destiny. To do this inner city schools and teachers must have flexibility in the selection of textbooks and in the utilization of creative teaching techniques. Standard textbooks which ignore or demean the contribution of African and Afro-Americans certainly must be supplanted by books which teach our children their worth and value. More classes must be problem-centered in terms of discussion and understanding of the everyday urban problems which must eventually be solved under the leadership of Afro-Americans. The creative abilities of Afro-American children in the arts, in dance, and in creative writing must be developed but not at the expense of academic studies. In all these respects an effective school curriculum for inner city schools must differ markedly from the curriculum of the outlying schools. This must not be interpreted to mean that inner city schools will not be required to meet the same grade level achievement tests as outlying schools. Rather, it means that this is the only method by which inner city children will be able to meet the objective achievement standards which we have proposed be set by the state board of education.

This new orientation for inner city schools not only requires Afro-American administrators and teachers in inner city schools. It also requires the transfer out of these schools of white personnel who are unable or unready to teach within this educational framework. There are too many white teachers now teaching in inner city schools who cannot possibly give Afro-American children a sense of pride and belief in their own destiny because, consciously or unconsciously, they believe in the inferiority of all non-whites.

This new orientation should also make possible the involvement and funding of community black arts groups like the Concept East Theatre in the Cultural Enrichment programs of inner city schools.

IV. CONCLUSION

Inner city schools must instill in our children the racial pride expressed by Dr. Vincent Harding at the May, 1967 Detroit Conference on Racism in American Education in his statement that "it must be terrible *not* to be born black in this day and age." After 400 years of the white man's enforced separation, black people are rejecting the dream of integration as the goal for their struggle and are instead finding pride in their own history, culture and power, seeking to develop their own independent leadership, organizations and programs, and determined that the separation which the white man has forced upon them shall now be used for their advancement rather than for their exploitation.

After 400 years of self-defeating "individualism" born of oppression and the psychological need of the oppressed to identify with the oppressor through the search for status, special privileges and crumbs from the master's table, black people are coming to realize that the black man's freedom from oppression and exploitation, like his search for status and an acceptable self-image, is not an individual thing to be fought for and won person by person, but a group accomplishment to be secured only through the power of a united black people.

We feel strongly that no city can long endure if it refuses to face realistically the problem created by its continuing failure to educate more than 50% of its population. We are confident that our proposals are realistic and constructive and can halt the steady disintegration of this urban community.

QUALITY EDUCATION IN CONNECTICUT

The Connecticut State Board of Education, in regular session on December 7, 1966, *voted* to adopt the following policy statement:

"The State Board of Education is committed to promote quality education for every child in the State. The Board recognizes that the high concentration of minority group children in urban schools produces special problems in providing quality education. Isolation and lack of exposure to the mainstream of American society make it difficult for these children to achieve their full educational potential. Therefore, the Board will assert its leadership in demonstrating, both through experimentation and proved methods, its particular concern for them. The State Board will help local boards of education to remove impediments to learning and development that face such children by providing consultative and financial assistance, and furthermore, will encourage cooperative efforts to this end among local boards of education and other agencies."

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